

## Taoism in the Three Counties of the Korean Peninsula: Its Age and Motif

CHUNG Jo myo

People, sacred animals, constellations, wizards and female wizards are depicted in the wall paintings of the tombs of ancient Koguryo. Although they were painted at the order of the ruling class of that age, it reveals the religious worldview and views of birth and death held by the people of that age. In the written historical sources, such as the Chinese histories, Kwangeto Wan, *Samguk sagi*, *Samguk yusa*, the ruling class is noted as belonging to the Puyo tribes. These texts clearly distinguish between the internal constituent elements of Koguryo and that of the ruling class. This is one reason why it is believed that Koguryo had intimate relations with other regions from the time of its founding. The religion of the ruling class, which had frequent contact with other regions, was connected to the religion of the Chinese continent. One such example is Taoism, which was widely practiced in China and exerted great political and social influence.

According to Koguryo sources, Taoism was transmitted to Koguryo in the early seventh century. However, there are several theories concerning the date of the introduction of Taoism to Koguryo. One theory holds that it was transmitted before the Christian era. Because of the lack of material, this problem has been the focus of intense debate. In my paper, I have attempted to reconsider the date of the arrival of Taoism to Korea by considering references to rituals, dragons and southern altars, all of which are believed to be associated to Taoism, found in the Chronicles of Koguryo, Paekche and Silla in the *Samguk sagi*.

In my attempt, I have also made use of motifs found in wall painting from tombs in ancient Koguryo and Silla, funerary good, three-legged kettles, mirrors and other materials associated with Taoism. As a result, I have concluded that Taoism was known in Koguryo several centuries before early seventh century, and furthermore, that Taoism was taken into Paekche and Silla in the early sixth century.